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ductions as enlightened as Miss Cornell's, Mr. Evans's, Miss Webster's, the Mercury "Julius Caesar," the Old Vic's, and the screen's "Henry V," to move back through the years beyond Fritz Lieber's and Robert B. Mantell's offerings right into the epoch of the Crummles family. Furthermore, he has dared to do this with "King Lear," a tragedy so monumental in its grandeur that it would resist complete realization on the stage even if Granville-Barker were alive to direct Laurence Olivier as the King in a company including the world's best actors.

Outside a hospital ward, seldom have so many pajamas and nightgowns been assembled as, with a belt looped here and a shawl draped there, Mr. Wolfit has brought together in the name of Ancient Britain. What is in most of these nightgowns and pajamas is no less distressing. It is a band of players, all lungs and lips, gutturals and reverberations, who envelop the tragedy in a fog of incomprehensibility.

Mr. Wolfit is an exception. Visually, he has his impressive moments. He has a tireless voice. Its range is extensive. He reads several scenes extremely well. Here and there he makes it plain that, with proper direction and some help from the switchboard, his scene designer, and his fellow-actors, he could be an acceptable Lear (as Lears go) in a pedestrian way.

To see him, however, is not to see Shakespeare's "Lear" acted. It is to have Lamb's paradox confirmed. It is "to see an old man tottering about the stage with a walking stick, turned out of doors by his daughters in a rainy night. . . . The contemptible machinery, by which they mimic the storm which he goes out in, is not more inadequate to represent the horrors of the real elements than any actor can be to represent Lear; they might more easily propose to personate the Satan of Milton upon a stage, or one of Michael Angelo's terrible figures. The greatness of Lear is not in corporal dimension, but in intellectual; the explosions of his passion are terrible as a volcano—they are storms turning up and disclosing to the bottom that sea, his mind, with all its vast riches. . . . On the stage we see nothing but corporal infirmities and weakness, the impotence of rage; while we read it, we see not Lear, but we are Lear—we are in his mind, we are sustained by a grandeur which baffles the malice of daughters and storms."

This much, at least, can be said for Mr. Wolfit's production. It sends us back to re-read "Lear," not only out of necessity but with a new pleasure.
 JOHN MASON BROWN.

Slim Volumes

SOLITAIRE. By Alison Kimball. Wilmington, Del.: The Wilmington Poetry Society. 1946. 16 pp. \$1.75.

TOKEN OF REMEMBRANCE. By Susan Sharp Adams. The same.

Reviewed by I. L. SALOMON

THIS very young poet has more than considerable talent. All of her poems in "Solitaire" were written between her sixteenth and nineteenth years, and most of them have the impulse of poetic discrimination. She has a good eye, a good ear, and a way with words that is refreshing. What she lacks in austere discipline we can attribute to her youth, but she counterbalances this by precise observation. She has warmth and heart and wit, and if her verse forms are in traditional patterns, she gives them the distinction of her personality. "Planned Retreat" would grace the work of a maturer poet:

Before they burn another town,
 before more bombers come,
 I shall creep off and settle down
 where animals are dumb.

I shall forget familiar names
 and learn the forest words;
 while men I know go down in flames
 I will mourn fallen birds.

But if some bit of life still stands
 after the smoke has died,
 I shall crawl back on knees and hands
 and beg to come inside.

There are only sixteen poems in "Solitaire," but a dozen of them are good.

Susan Sharp Adams is an older poet. She is at ease in the lyric, the sonnet, and the narrative. "The Surgeon," "Grist," and "Ebb-Tide" stand well above her other work, some of which is passable, and some downright intolerable. "Young Tragedy" and "The Traffic Cop" are postscripts to verse rather than poetry.

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Misty Childhood

THE WHITE ROCK. By Denys Val Baker. New York: D. Appleton-Century. 1947. 216 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by HAROLD TAGER, JR.

NOVELS, especially first novels, about childhood and adolescence generally are considered hazardous. Even with considerable self-focus and self-search, the artistic recall is likely to be a rather wavering underwater view of the childhood reality, with the possibilities for accuracy lying somewhere between a slight blurring and complete distortion.

In one sense, at least, it is difficult to criticize Mr. Baker on this basis. If eleven-year-old Margiad never emerges into the bright daylight, it is because she is never really intended to do so. Mad of brain, distorted of vision, she moves closer and closer to the drowning world of pure hallucination. With phantasy become reality, reality become motion, she swims out to the "White Rock" far off the Welsh coast, where her mother supposedly lies hiding in fugitive fear of her father.

So almost does Powys, but Powys, Mr. Baker indicates, is not mad. That Powys, seven years old, should pretend to believe as eleven-year-old Margiad believed, in the existence of the "White Rock" is excellent psychology in terms of a sister fixation. That pretension should have become belief, however, for Powys as well as for Margiad, is, I think, a severe underestimation of a child's relation to reality.

Mr. Baker has sensed this himself. For Powys he has fixed several points of reality, the familiar, polar magnetic points of any child, a father, an uncle, and an aunt. Yet aware as the father, Auntie Sian, and Uncle Emrys are of the consuming dangers which attend both Powys and Margiad, we wait in vain for Powys's father to make the simple, explicit explanation: "Your mother is insane; your mother is in a sanitarium; your sister is going insane; there is no White Rock; come, I will show you in my boat." And why, indeed, is Margiad never committed to a sanitarium as well?

Like most romantics, Mr. Baker has been interested in sustaining a single, overwhelming, atmospheric effect. He does—with a style that is frequently sensitive, but too often overcharged, too often blurred. Let me add that the mist he throws up is not unpleasant; once having ceased to peer for the clear signs and the right road, you can wander at will and enjoy the Welsh landscape.

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